

[Hawlemont Regional School District budget stands firm](#)

Bella Levavi, Staff Reporter, Greenfield Recorder Published: 02-24-2024 10:38 PM

CHARLEMONT — The Hawlemont Regional School District's budget for the next fiscal year, amounting to approximately \$1.6 million, will be presented at a public hearing on Thursday at the Hawlemont Gymnasium, starting at 5:15 p.m.

The budget reflects a 2% decrease from the previous fiscal year, meaning there will be no change to Charlemont's \$1,324,871 assessment, while Hawley's assessment will decrease by 12% to \$256,000.

"We have put in a lot of work over the past couple of years, and we are starting to see it pay off," said William Lataille, assistant superintendent of Business and Finance for both the Mohawk Trail Regional School District and the Hawlemont Regional School District.

With grants secured by school Principal Amber Tulloch and additional rural aid, the school district was able to compensate for the lost income from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds (COVID relief funding) received over the past few years.

"I am incredibly proud of what we are presenting. Hawlemont staff, students, and families have worked very hard and are seeing significant increases in student achievement and community connectedness," Tulloch wrote in an email to the Recorder. "Simultaneously, we recognize the strain rural education has on supporting towns. Our families, friends, neighbors, and community partners are holding up the school. This budget speaks to our commitment to our community and, most importantly, for the best education for our students."

The most significant changes are in transportation compared to the previous fiscal year's budget, increasing by 25% and the school has settled a new contract this year. Kuzmeskus Transportation, the company currently serving Hawlemont, was the sole bidder for the new contract. Lataille explained that the district collaborated with other districts to create a joint bid, saving money.

Much of this increase, according to Lataille, is due to decreased reimbursements from the state for transportation. He noted that while about 90% of transportation costs were reimbursed by the state in the past, this year that number has decreased to about 60%. Maintenance and operations also increased by 10%.

Salaries and benefits constitute the largest portion of the budget, costing the district about \$1.47 million. Despite contracts obligating the school to issue 2.5% raises annually, this line item did not increase. With new staff additions coming in with lower salaries and the district using grants to offset costs, this line experienced no increases.

"We are continuously balancing the needs of students and opportunities for student learning while acknowledging our town's constraints on funding increases," Lataille said.

Lataille mentioned that the district did not see any increases in the budget because they utilized reserves in the school of choice fund as well as the excess and deficiency fund. He also noted that phase two of the sustainability study being conducted by the Hawlemont and Mohawk Trail Regional School Districts will help ensure the sustainability of the districts moving forward.

"With opportunities and programs like the HAY program and other curriculum offerings, people are recognizing that Hawlemont is a great place to educate their kids," Lataille continued. "We encourage people to attend the public hearing if they have any questions."

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